15.5
5854.3

Christianity designed for the World, and the World designed for Christianity.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT CINCINNATI, OHIO, OCTOBER 4, 1853,

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS.

AT THEIR

FORTY-FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING.

BY WILLIAM ADAMS, D. D.
OF NEW YORK CITY.

BOSTON:
PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN, 42 CONGRESS ST.
1854.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2013

http://archive.org/details/christianitydesi00adam

SERMON.

MATTHEW XIII. 38.

THE FIELD IS THE WORLD.

When Oliver Goldsmith wrote his "Citizen of the World," there is no evidence that he had any comprehension of the religious idea involved in the title chosen for that captivating production. Every Christian is a true cosmopolite. The world is one; and for this large and scattered family God has revealed but one religion. When we assert the imperative claims of the Christian religion to universal faith and obedience, many are disposed to evade the obligation by affirming that Christianity is only one of the many religions of the world; that its historical origin is comparatively recent; its geographical jurisdiction is and always has been very limited; its practical influence, if not a failure, is certainly by no means commensurate with its vast pretensions; and, last of all, that, as politics, the arts and sciences have each their appropriate and distinctive domain, so the gospel of Christ is but one of the many subordinate agencies of the world; a kind of side play, whose proper province

is within a certain professional class, and whose field of display is the Sabbath, the church, the house of affliction, and the courts of death; and because of this meagre induction, thousands absolve themselves from all obligation, either to receive or propagate the religion of the Son of God.

Christianity is not a mere afterthought, but an original project; not an episode, but the main plot; it does not belong prescriptively to the small strips of land here and there where its light now shines; its field is the world, and its ultimate jurisdiction will be universal. As our belief on this subject is not a matter of theoretic calculation, or philosophic deduction, but of religious faith, we may expect to find in Christianity itself, its doctrines and its history, the promise and the proof of its universal prevalence. But what is Christianity? Where is Christianity? Not an aroma floating in the air. Not a soft and poetic sentiment playing through the imagination of the philanthropic. It is a historical existence, and is to be examined and judged in its own inspired and infallible records.

Assembled to-day on the beautiful banks of the Ohio, a thousand miles from the place where, forty years ago, this missionary association was organized, and thousands more from the spot where, eighteen hundred years ago, the Author of our religion gave the commission to evangelize the world; cheered by the memory of past successes, and studious still of the methods by which we may bear the gospel of our Lord from river to river and from sea to sea, let us, first of all, go entirely back to the inspired

chronicles of our faith, and gather up some of the facts therein contained, bearing on that one sentiment to which we are publicly pledged,—"Christianity designed for the world, and the world designed for Christianity."

The first fact to be mentioned is, that Christianity *asserts* its *own universality;* and this not incidentally, but as inherent in its first and vital principles. There is no authority and there can be no comfort in the Christian Revelation to me, as an individual, if that authority and that comfort extend not equally to all mankind. The gospel addresses us simply as men. It recognizes us only as citizens of the world. It knows no national distinction and no territorial boundaries. Its two central ideas are SIN and SALVATION; man has fallen, and for man has Christ died. The nations are many; but the world is one. Begin your genealogical pedigree where you will, in whatever portion of the earth's surface, among whatever kindred or tribe, all will converge at last towards the first links of the chain which describe the beginning of our race: "who was the son of Adam—who was the Son of God." It is the race of man, the whole race, that have felt the direful visitations of sin; and the offers of pardon and restoration are commensurate with the evils they would remedy. "*To the whole world,*" is the superscription upon the royal proclamation of amnesty and glad tidings. Question this universality in the gospel's own structure and adaptation, and you quench the hopes which brighten your own path; since you are but one of a common race.

The Christian religion, moreover, is the *only* religion which asserts its own universality. The accomplished Reinhard has achieved a goodly service in the analysis which he has given of all the philosophies and religions of the world, in proof of the fact, that, prior to the commission given to the Eleven on the Mount of Ascension, the idea is not to be found of a religious system which claimed to be universal in its adaptation. When the Prophet of Mecca, ignorant of the fact authenticated by modern science, that there are parts of the habitable globe where the sun rises and sets but once for months in succession, incorporated in the Koran the practical precept, that the religious fasts to be observed by men should begin at the very instant the limb of the sun appeared above the horizon, and should be continued strictly until the same disappeared in the western sky, he not only proved the provincialism but the falsity of his religion. Nor was he the only instance in which, through the unconscious adhesions of things absurd and impossible, the ancient fable has found a sober verification; the eagle, purloining meat from the altar of the gods, and perceiving not the coal of fire adhering thereto by which its own nest was to be consumed.

No sooner do we set forth this claim of Christianity to an universal range and authority, than we are met by an objection greatly urged by modern infidelity, — an objection which scoffs at all our religious propagandism, for it affirms the historical fact, that Christianity is only a recent introduction;

that Jesus of Nazareth was not born until two-thirds of the world's age was passed, and that, as good men existed before his advent, under other forms of worship, it is absurd to claim that his religion is the only true and sufficient one for all men and for all times. An objection we admit well put, if we were allowed to forswear the fact recorded by inspiration, that Christianity did not begin in Bethlehem of Judea. It began in Eden; and among the many proofs that it is the one and only true religion which God has revealed is this, that it is the very oldest of all. Long before the Persian adored the sun, or the Chaldean bowed before the hosts of heaven, or the Egyptian framed his colossal altars and idolatries, did Christianity begin its veritable life and progress. Wonder not that the antagonists of the Christian system expend so much time and talent in proving what they affirm, the falsity and absurdity of the Jewish religion. Think not that it is a mere matter of biblical criticism, or philological lore, when so much pains are taken to eject the Epistle to the Hebrews from the inspired canon. Most warily has infidelity chosen its points for attack; and we frankly confess, that were we not fully fortified in the belief of the connection of the Jewish and Christian dispensations as together forming one substantial identity, the one religion revealed to man from heaven, there is no form in which our minds would be so open to skeptical intrusions concerning the necessity of embracing ourselves, and communicating to others, the Christian system as the only hope

of man, as that which Neology has assumed in its assaults upon the Jewish system. Therefore it is that inspiration has, to such a degree, exhausted its own skill and explicitness, in explaining to us the appurtenances and forms of the Patriarchal and Levitical worships. Those were not of human origin, like the tripod of the Grecian flamen, the Eleusinian mysteries, or the forms of Druidical worship. They were copied from the pattern shown to Moses in the Mount. Though now obsolete, yet they are not to be classed with the mummeries of false religions. It was Christianity which smoked in the first sacrificial victim that was offered outside the gates of forfeited Paradise. It was Christianity that was enshrined in that sacred ark which was borne across the brilliant sands of Syria, and between the crystal walls of the parted Jordan. It was Christianity that entered the Holy of Holies, in tabernacle and temple, with graven breast-plate and atoning blood. But it was Christianity not yet in its ripeness and readiness; only in its promise and preparation. Christianity was there, just as whole harvests of grain are now included in the husks of that handful of corn which is yet to germinate; just as immense forests were once enclosed within the shell and burr of the seed-nut from whence sprang growth and reproduction.

It is not incumbent on any human wisdom to explain why God appointed such length and slowness to the preparatory stages of revealed redemption. Why should summer insects measure the stupendous revolutions of the stars by the wheelings

of their own tiny flights? We, indeed, might refute objections alleged against this progressive development of Christianity, by appealing to all the analogies of nature, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Corn is not fit to be used for planting and reproduction while yet in the blade. And it is quite pertinent to our present argument concerning the universality of the Christian system, to remind ourselves that, though the revelation of Christianity began in the early dawn of history, yet its world-wide diffusion was not authorized until the fullness of time had come.

It is not an admission extorted from us reluctantly, but a patent fact to which, as studious of the ways of God, we call a special attention, that the typical institutions of Christianity were strictly local and stationary. It was not owing to human defects and unfaithfulness, that nothing was done for ages by way of propagating the true faith. This was in accordance with divine direction and interdict. The people chosen to be the depositaries of the one revelation from God, were isolated from the rest of the world by a thousand laws and limitations. Matrimonial alliances, out of their own nation, were strictly prohibited. To convert remote nations to their religion was not their vocation. The admission of proselytes from abroad, though permitted in certain cases, was guarded, according to the structure of their religious system, with the greatest caution. Everything tended to seclusion and concentration, rather than diffusion and extension.

It is of the utmost importance to be understood, that the Jewish system, notwithstanding its relations to the redemption of Christ, was as purely local as our court of common pleas. It was not designed for aggression at all. It had no agencies for propagandism. It was in no sense organized for extension into foreign parts. The high priest was a fixture. No itinerant service had he to perform in Moab or Idumea. No other man on earth was permitted to do what he was ordained of God to perform, and his service was to be rendered only within the solemn precincts of the temple. The sacred scrolls were in the custody of a particular order of men; and the rites of the true religion could only be performed by a certain line of consecrated succession. Everything was arranged to preserve the one revealed faith unmixed and uncontaminated from the profane touch of the heathen.

Observe, at the same time, how the providential condition of the world was suited to this formative and infant state of revealed Christianity. The state of the earth was unfavorable to intercommunication. There were few facilities for travel and commerce. Early in the world's history, men had sought on the plains of Shinar to centralize wealth, population and empire. By a special act, God defeated their purpose, and separated them into distinct tribes and nations, by diversities of language. Everything tended to segregation. A range of mountains, a river, a sea, were sufficient barriers to national intercourse. What an immense trial of faith was it for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to

pass and repass between the Euphrates, the Jordan and the Nile, where now tourists from this western world find their holiday recreation. Both sacred and profane history abound with proofs of the separateness and solitariness of the nations. Homer is supposed to have lived at the very time that the splendors of the Jewish economy culminated at the court and the temple of Solomon. But the author of the Odyssey was entirely ignorant of countries within a few hours' sail of Greece. The Argonautic expedition is described as sailing up through the Hellespont and the Euxine, and returning by the Pillars of Hercules; as if the sea of Azof were connected with the Atlantic Ocean. The author of the Æneid, describing his hero landing on the shores of Carthage by the inevitable event of shipwreck, relates the consternation which he felt in expectation of losing his life because a stranger and a foreigner.

While typical Christianity, for the sake of its own preservation and purity, was local and stationary, the world itself was retained in a condition suited to the purpose. Time advances, and striking changes occur simultaneously in both. The prophecies of the Hebrew faith are kindling into the morning; all the rays of truth and hope are converging towards the advent of the Son of God; and Christianity is approaching the days of her enlargement and completion. The old walls of partition are broken down. The gorgeous pile of symbolic architecture which crowned the top of Moriah, like an immense mould, was to be broken

to pieces; and the spiritual fabric that had been cast therein was to be brought forth to the light. The Kings of the East, the appointed agencies of God, swept down from the Caucasus to the Mediterranean, like birds of prey, and spoiled the sanctities of the Holy City. God's chosen nation, so long preserved in their integrity and separation, are dispersed like the chaff by the whirlwind, and throne and temple vanish from the earth. The nations of the earth become infused and intermixed, passing and repassing in the jostlings and attritions of war, conquering and being conquered,—all in the order of inspired prediction,—until Christianity was ready for the world, when lo! the world is made ready for Christianity!

When the embryo religion was yet in its needful seclusion and quiet, there had been secretly and slowly coming into life a new and masculine power, which was destined to change the face of the world. It began before Isaiah had fallen a victim to the rage of Manasseh; before Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed, and Daniel, interpreting the finger of God, had announced the rise of successive dynasties. It had more than a hundred thousand inhabitants when Xerxes marshaled his hosts on the banks of the Hellespont. Its population had reached a quarter of a million, before Alexander the Great had subjugated the East by his tremendous exploits at Arbela and the Granicus. Rolling through its successive eras, ever tending to aggrandizement, like a swelling river, it at length absorbs in its own vast supremacy all the kingdoms

of the world. Sicily, Carthage, Epirus, Macedonia, Pergamos, Bithynia, Galatia, Pontus, Syria, Cappadocia, Egypt, Judea, Gaul and Britain, all became provinces and appendages of the Roman Empire. Never before was any dominion so distinguished by universality. Her consuls and her eagles, at the same time, were on the shores of Wales and the banks of the Tigris; on the summits of the Carpathian mountains, and along the Arabian and Lybian deserts.

In this new phase and condition of the world, in one of the provinces of this universal empire, the Son of God was born, the Lamb of God was slain, and the gospel was ready for the world. For the first time, since the world was made, was the commission given to evangelize all nations. An end had come to everything typical and preparatory; to everything local and exclusive. The Jew, as such, was to be known no more. To MAN is the gospel given. All mankind were now to share in privileges which hitherto had been reserved and restricted to a peculiar people. The early promise made to Abraham, in the dim dawn of the world, "All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him," found its incipient fulfillment, when, standing on the slope of Olivet, on the morning of his ascension, the Son of God, radiant with the joys of his finished redemption, said to his disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Hard was it for the best and bravest of their number to comprehend this universal quality of the faith they preached. Supernatural methods were put in requi-

sition to convince Peter himself, that the old distinction between clean and unclean was abrogated forever; and when, obedient to the mission, he visited the house of Cornelius, Jewish prejudices were so strong that he was arraigned before a council at Jerusalem for preaching the gospel to a Gentile. One by one, the scales fell; by little and little, the truth prevailed, till at last the glorious conviction was reached, that to be a Christian was more than to be a Jew; and that in the length and breadth, height and depth of one universal faith, all the preceding distinctions of men were to be swallowed up forever. The tiny insects of the Pacific seas, building up the reefs which breast and break the surges of the ocean, the islands and continents on which vegetation rises and cities swarm with life, can have no anticipation of the magnificent results of their subaqueous architecture. No more had the successive emperors of Rome, in the play and passion of personal ambition, in the blind impulses of self-aggrandizement, any knowledge or imagination of the uses of their success; but these arise out of the ocean depths of God's wisdom. Their military roads and bridges were built, their consulates and prefectures were established, and along these 'highways of the Lord' came bounding the footsteps of a free and beneficent Christianity.

With these combinations of the gospel's own nature, history and providential adaptations full in our minds, let us now inquire, for our own practical help and guidance, what were the agencies by which the religion of Christ received its first rapid

and general promulgation. These were of three kinds: the *miraculous*, the *organized*, and the *spontaneous*.

The *miraculous* was of temporary necessity, and having subserved this, was suspended. Using the word in its strict rhetorical sense, we say that the *presumption* at first was against the religion of the cross; that is to say, the '*onus probandi*' was with those who first preached it in opposition to long established institutions.* That obligation was not evaded, but met; the author of our religion furnishing his disciples with the power of establishing their proofs through miraculous attestations. But now, after the long and eventful history of the Christian religion, the "burden of proof" is reversed; and if miracles are to be looked for at all, they must be demanded of those who would disprove this ancient, venerable and unshaken faith of the world. If it be retorted that, in other lands than our own, in the presence of the aged superstitions of heathenism, the "burden of proof" rests upon the Christian missionaries who invade them, we admit the fact, rejoicing that such men are deputed for the service as are fully competent and equipped to meet the demands with proofs and arguments, even though the original help of mira-

---

* According to the most correct use of the term, a "Presumption" in favor of any supposition, means, not (as has been sometimes erroneously imagined) a preponderance of antecedent probability in its favor, but such a *preoccupation* of the ground as implies that it must stand good till some sufficient reason is adduced against it; in short, that the *Burden of proof* lies on the side of him who would dispute it. There is a Presumption in favor of every *existing* institution.—*Whately's Rhetoric*, P. I. ch. iii. § 2.

cles is now entirely withdrawn. Christianity asks and expects no more miraculous assistance in her aggressions; and we dismiss this original agency from our inventory of available forces with the single remark, that the miracles which were wrought by or in connection with the first teachers of Christianity, were all, without an exception, designed to aid and illustrate its universal jurisdiction. The miracle of tongues, the first and most notable of all, is itself a proof that the Christian faith was to be no longer restricted to one time or language,—a miracle needful once only, when men untaught and illiterate were to open communication with the assembled representatives of all nations and languages; but altogether superfluous to-day, when, by the processes of education and the intermingling of men, the acquisition of various languages is an easy and ordinary occurrence.

By the *organized* evangelism of primitive believers, we mean all such human agencies as imply method, plan, system and sagacious adaptation, whether on the part of churches or individuals. Directed to tarry first at Jerusalem, the disciples forgot their world-wide commission till persecution, with its friendly violence, scattered them like a frightened flock. Comprehending, at length, the nature of their trust, we detect wisdom and forethought in the ordination of particular men to particular services. Peter, James and John, "who seemed to be pillars," went unto the circumcision; while Paul and Barnabas were set apart to the ministry of the heathen. What wonders of wis-

dom are suggested by the bare mention of his name who is known as "the great Apostle to the Gentiles." Lord Lyttelton, fully persuaded that the Bible was an imposture and determined to expose it, selected the conversion of Paul as the subject of hostile criticism, and was himself converted to the truth of Christianity by the very topic chosen for its overthrow. Passing by the phenomena of the Apostle's conversion, it seems to us that an irrefutable argument for the universality of the Christian religion is suggested by the qualities which met in this remarkable man and minister. The service to be accomplished was the widest possible dissemination of the new faith among all nations; the infusion of Christianity into the mind of the world. But what was the mind of the world at that time? Not simple, but complicated. Three forms of civilization there were, distinct yet related, Jewish, Grecian, and Roman. Intermingled were the representatives of each, from farthest East to utmost West. The Jew was ubiquitous, from the Indus to the Tiber, with all the memories of his religion and the pride of his ancestry. The Greek had built his commercial cities and reared his elegant academies in Egypt and Syria. The translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek by the Seventy at Alexandria; Philo, the Jewish philosopher, in the same city, and Josephus, the Jewish courtier at Jerusalem, both ambitiously addicted to Grecian literature, are evidences to what extent the Greek language and philosophy had become diffused; while, as we have seen, over

the whole, East, West, North and South, the towering eagle of Imperial Rome was in the ascendancy. How many qualities must be combined in the man who, bearing the august title of "Apostle to the Nations," was to be sent forth to persuade such a heterogeneous civilization of the truth of the Christian religion. A Jew by birth, of the straitest sect, trained in every rite and law pertaining to the religion of his fathers, thoroughly experienced in every prejudice, objection and sympathy of the Pharisee; at the same time, born in Tarsus, a Greek city, the rival of Athens and Alexandria in the zeal of letters; from his childhood a proficient in the Greek language, familiar with the Septuagint as with the Hebrew original, a reader of the Greek drama and a great master of that "mental management" which then was to be learned only within the circle of Grecian dialectics and rhetoric, among his peers on Areopagus, in the presence of Stoic and Epicurean, comprehending perfectly the scorn which sat on the curled lip and gleamed from the half-shut eyes of his erudite auditors when he preached unto them the foolishness of the cross; superadded to all which, he was by birth a free Roman citizen, the highest protection and prerogative of his age, so that in every peril from Jew or Greek he was shielded as by Minerva's ægis, the report that he was a Roman throwing open the jail of Philippi for his egress, delivering him from the scourge and the mob on the castle stairs at Jerusalem, carrying him into the presence of governors and kings; and an appeal to Cæsar, transporting him over the Adriatic to the imperial city, where he had often longed to

go, and where, with mingled dignity, heroism and success, he preached the gospel of Christ "at Rome also;" aye, within the very precincts of the palace; Who can study this correspondency of exigencies and qualities in the person of him who leads the long column of Christian evangelists, without admitting the lesson thus taught the Christian church, for all time, concerning the wisdom of preparation, method, adaptation and combination in all her missionary aggression?

Passing from those ordained and official agencies which, as we believe, are perpetual in the church for her edification and enlargement, there remains another, among the earliest instruments of Christian evangelism, which we have called the *spontaneous*, and, as we might have added, the secular and laical; which, however overlooked and suspected now, if we have rightly interpreted the facts of the New Testament, was at the beginning among the most honored and successful of all human instrumentalities, and which is to be revived again, in more than pristine force, as a grand reliance of our modern missions.

It was by no accident that so large a concourse of unofficial persons, from all parts of the world, were assembled at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. "Then they that were scattered abroad," so reads the Sacred Record, "went everywhere preaching the word."* Stumble not at the word

* To render it certain that the allusion here is not to the ordained officials of the church, it is added in the same chapter, (Acts viii.) "they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, *except the Apostles.*"

"preaching," because of the official associations which are connected with it by modern usage. It signifies simply, in its original sense, the act of evangelizing or reporting abroad the good news of salvation. The news of a great victory outstrips the official heralds who are sent to announce it. The idea on which we would insist is already before you. Stately apostleships, ordained dignitaries were not the only channels of saving grace. The ceremonial holiness and exclusiveness which, as we have seen, belonged to the official persons, representing the preparatory dispensations of Christianity, were lost forever when Christianity had reached its ripeness and universality. Profanation was it for any mortal, save the anointed son of Levi, to touch the vessels of the local worship; but now that the fountains of life are unsealed, every one who receives of their fullness heralds it abroad in every place. A matter of personal experience, they could not leave it behind them; but bore it with them as an inseparable part of their own life.

The Christian faith was thus propagated in the easiest and most natural of all methods. It was the outbreaking of spontaneous and irrepressible force. It revealed and declared itself, as light shines, without compulsion. Such is our conception of the spontaneity with which the honest self-conviction of the earliest converts to Christ made expression of itself, that it strikes us as something preposterous, to imagine the first company of disciples engaged in urging one another to a more earnest propagation of the faith by that style of arguments, drawn from philanthropy, obligation,

expediency, necessity and policy, which make up the persuasion of our modern missionary aggression. There is next to nothing of all this in the New Testament. Possessing, or rather possessed by this one fact of the gospel, that Jesus Christ had died for the world's redemption, they spread the glorious tidings wherever they went.

One of the most pregnant passages in all the New Testament, bearing on Christian missions, is that last chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which, consisting chiefly of personal salutations to private persons, might strike a superficial eye, as the least promising and instructive, containing nothing but a bare and arid catalogue of names.

There was at this time, Anno Domini 60, a Christian church, that is, a body of Christian believers in the imperial city. It had been in existence for a considerable time. It had grown to such a magnitude as to justify the Apostle in addressing to it the most elaborate of all his Epistles. By whom was that church established? By some, it has been regarded as of prime importance to hold that the Apostle Peter was the founder of that metropolitan church. By itself, the assertion is of very little consequence; correct or incorrect, not worth a tithe of the words which have been expended upon the controversy. But the assertion does not stand by itself. It is the foundation-stone of a vast system of hierarchical pretension. Archbishop Whately has a capital essay on *omissions*. We infer as much, in certain cases, from what is *not* said, as, in others, from what *is* said. The classical reader will remember that it was the mere

absence of Cato's statue in the Roman procession, which was so suspicious and suggestive. Here have we, from the pen of "our beloved brother Paul," kindly mention of all the Christians he had ever known, resident in the imperial capital, without a single allusion to him who is now claimed by the Roman primacy to have been the founder, and, at that very time, the resident Bishop of the church at Rome. By whom was it founded? The evidence is before us. Ordinary men and women, engaged in the common occupations of life, merchants, craftsmen, freedmen, who, traveling from one country to another in their professional pursuits, carried in their own bosoms the vital forces of the Christian faith. The first greeting in these apostolical reminiscences is to Aquila, and his wife Priscilla, of whom we have heard before. Five years previously, when the decree of Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome, these unpretending artisans — for they were tent-makers — arrived in Corinth, and Paul wrought with them. Eighteen months afterwards, they accompanied the Apostle to Ephesus, where they stood by him in his perils, and where a church was gathered in their house. Laical and humble in their occupations, their attainments in piety were of no ordinary kind; for when Apollos commenced his brilliant career as an eloquent preacher at Corinth, they received him to their own lodgings and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. The death of Claudius removing the interdict by which they were exiled, this pious couple return to Rome, kindle the fires on their own altar, and forthwith Paul sends his

greetings to the "church which is in their house." The evangelic prediction of Zechariah is already accomplished.* Every domestic utensil in the houses of men is sanctified more truly than the golden bowl on the ancient altar. Ceremonially, unholy was woman esteemed in relation to the mysteries of the symbolic temple; but no sooner are the blessings of Christianity ready for universal diffusion, than we find the Apostle here making honorable mention of the Marys and Priscillas, of Persis, Tryphena and Tryphosa, godly women, who "labored with him" in the gospel, consecrating the graces and amenities of their sex to the one end of diffusing the savor of Christ's name in every place. Nor was this all. As a beautiful illustration of the ease and readiness with which Christianity adjusts itself to extrinsic necessities, where the vital power is within, instead of being compressed and laced within prescribed and changeless forms, the first personage introduced, in this chapter, is a woman who had an *official* connection with the church at Cenchrea—a deaconess by appointment —because the conventional usages of the times, secluding the female sex by themselves, left them accessible, even when most they needed instruction and hope, only to one of themselves; nor should the church ever forget or forego the right she possesses, of creating or pretermitting many forms of agency

* In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts. (Zech. xiv. 20, 21.) Now that the waters of life are for *diffusion*, a cup of horn, or iron, or potter's clay is canonical in the best of all senses, for it is useful.

which necessity and expediency may suggest, as a help to her saving work. We glory in the belief, that in all matters touching the real efficiency of the Christian church, she has received of her Lord the utmost liberty which her largest benevolence could desire. Water, air, light, are not more free in flowing into every opening and filling every cavity, than was the spirit of the primitive church in adapting its action to every exigency. We must go back to the records of Christianity themselves, if we would learn more of what the church is yet to learn much—the power and wisdom of lay-agency. Practical evangelism is not to be confined to Pauls and Peters, Brainerds and Martyns; and in the proper place, it may be well to institute the inquiry, whether among the means and methods of evangelizing the heathen it should not be projected by laymen, of all arts and professions, we do not say to be sent, but to send themselves, in the arrangements of their own trade, toil and traffic, all over the earth, for the express purpose of being succorers of the gospel, rearing churches—as did those men and women whose names inspiration has immortalized in this Roman epistle, above any emblazoned on classic pillar or tablet—in their own homes, and pouring light and love through all the channels of secular intercourse, upon the souls of the benighted.

And now, having considered the relations of Christianity and the world, at the beginning, together with some of the means by which the one was diffused throughout the other, we transport ourselves across intervening centuries and continents, to the

spot where we now stand, in the heart of the New World; and from this position, late in time, and remote in space from the point where Christianity began its flight, we are to ask whether the relations of these two objects, Christianity and the World, are such as will justify the sentiment to which we are pledged.

And here, the first fact which stretches itself entirely across our vision, is the astounding verity that eighteen centuries have entirely passed away since the ascension of our Lord, and yet so limited is the territorial domain of Christianity, that not one whole nation under heaven can be found entirely and thoroughly pervaded by its presence and power. Scoffing skepticism would bid us answer, what else than a chimera it can be, for us to set forth the notion that the world and Christianity were made one for another, when, after so long an experiment, Christianity has not even retained its own, but has been diluted by error, subject to monstrous abuses and perversions, and has lent itself to the most long-lived and tyrannical of all superstitions, cursing the nations it should have blessed, and diverted out of its course by a thousand obstacles.

We volunteer no explanation of the mysteries of Providence, in the history of the Christian religion. The life of God is eternal; and his plans extend through thousands of years. Speak of delays and disappointments, of long ages of darkness and of barbarism! Tell us of the centuries in which the Christian faith was wrapped up in the mummy cerements of formalism and superstition! The

very mistakes of men, in reference to religion, are instructive; and the experiments of human folly, though they consume ages, are a real economy of time; for men, when they are bent on making trial of their own expedients, in place of the blessed gospel, emerge on the hither side of the experiment with more of wisdom, more of self-conviction, because the lesson has been burned into them by centuries of suffering and shame. Multiply your objections to any degree, as drawn from the delays and corruptions of the Christian faith, the one fact remains, and this is all which we are concerned now to state, that Christianity has been a gainer at every stage and epoch of its eventful life. It has not merely survived opposition, but actually drawn lustre from reproach, and developed strength in every conflict, so that its practical power is greater now than ever it was before. Its power is greater to-day than when it was first preached at Jerusalem. It is greater now than when the labarum of Constantine blazoned the cross in courts and camps. It is greater now than when Britain was converted to the Christian faith; greater by far than at the era of the Reformation. It possesses a wider territorial jurisdiction than when the Puritans landed in the new world. Who can doubt that it has a stronger hold on the intelligent convictions of the world, than it had before Lord Herbert wrote his work, "De Veritate," Toland his "Christianity without Mystery," Lord Shaftesbury his "Characteristics," Collins his essay on "Free Thinking," Bolingbroke his "Essays and Fragments," Tindal

his "Christianity as old as the Creation," Hume his "Dialogues on Nature and Religion," or Paine his "Age of Reason."

If we have been instructed in observing the adaptations of Christianity and the world, one to another, at the beginning of the Christian era, who can doubt that both have proceeded from the same authorship, and have obeyed the same direction, in subsequent stages and developments?

We have spoken of *the world* as being ready for Christianity, when Christianity was ready for it. We mean the world *as it then was.* We have reason to believe that the feet of the Apostles and their contemporaries traversed the then known world, from Arabia to Britain. But how large a portion of the world we inhabit, was entirely concealed from their knowledge and approach. The roads surveyed by the last imperial decree before the advent of Christ, were less than four thousand miles in extent. The most westerly land known to the "mistress of the world" was one of the Canary Islands; the most northerly, called Ultima Thule, one of the Shetlands. Africa was supposed to be joined to Asia on the south, and was not circumnavigated till the fifteenth century after Christ. In the geography which was compiled by Ptolemy in the second century, we have embodied all the knowledge which then existed of the earth. From this we learn that the portion of land belonging to the globe, of which anything was known to Ptolemy and his contemporaries, was scarcely one-third of that which is known to us; while of the

one hundred and fifty-five millions of square miles of water covering the rest of the globe, they knew absolutely nothing. How scanty the knowledge possessed by them of the globe, appears from the belief then prevalent, that none but the temperate zone was habitable; both the torrid and the frigid zones being supposed to be destructive of animal life.

Plainly it was the intention of Providence, that Christianity should pass through various trials before, in its highest and latest sense, it should be fitted for the literal occupancy of the whole world. The mystery of the sea hid one entire hemisphere from human sight. These broad rivers were running their long way silently and wondrously to the sea. These forests grew and decayed, and grew again in their endless reproduction. These wide and western prairies lay beneath the eye of God, in patient and beautiful trust in the future uses of the Almighty. No Tyrian ship, no Egyptian barge, no Grecian argosy, no Roman galley, no Saracen flotilla was suffered to pass the "pillars of Hercules," and break the silence and mystery of the Western ocean, and plant on these shores the irradicable seeds of their varied and mighty superstitions. The time was not yet for the widest possible dissemination of the Christian faith.

Observe the changes to which Christianity itself was subject; trials and changes for which *time* was needful, and each and all of which were developing more and more of the universal qualities of the true faith.

The first great trial to which it was subject, was in the presence of Jewish intolerance and heathen hate. The one question was, whether it should be suffered to live. World-wide the persecution rages against the church. The Neros, the Caligulas, the Domitians of the earth resolved to drown the spreading "superstition" in blood. The more violently the storm rages, the deeper are the roots which the Christian faith strikes into the ground, and the broader the growth which it spreads into the air.

Next, Christianity was corrupted and perverted. The very power which before had assaulted the religion of Christ, now treacherously assumes the name, the crown, the robe and the sceptre of Christ, and the world became enslaved to an aged and colossal tyranny. The next advance of Christianity was to divest herself of all these falsehoods and enslavements, and come forth free and reformed.

The Protestant Reformation was a great event, marvelous in its nature and effects. But it was not an event complete and ultimate. It was only one of the demiurgic days of the world's creation. It was not the Sabbath of the world's finishing and repose. It was a movement in the right direction; but it implied the necessity and the promise of greater changes to come.

Protestantism itself crystalized into icy forms, and Christianity was lulled to sleep in the arms of political establishments. It had its rituals, its injunctions, its forced conformities; at length its lifeless ceremonies. It was needful that reformed,

Protestant Christianity, should have a second resurrection. At last it came. When truth had taken root, when it had become incorporated into church creeds, and had become an admitted element of national faith, then came the Puritans and the Non-conformists, an order of men whose sole desire was for spiritual life; and now it was that Christianity, invested with all the accumulated experience of ages, crosses the ocean, and finds, in a new world, the theatre for a new and higher development.

Observe, this country was not settled, not at all in the proper sense of the term, until after the Protestant Reformation. The men who gave a soul to our history were Protestants in a double sense; reformers of the reformation. Yet were they called of God to a service which, while it was needful and manly, was not the most favorable to spiritual extension. Times of resistance to ecclesiastical despotism are not the most auspicious for true evangelism. Those who are summoned to do vigorous battle against positive wrongs, are not always the best prepared or the most successful in making glad the wilderness with the verdure and bloom of the gospel. This accounts for the fact that, at the Reformation, Christianity, though liberated by the struggles of Truth, was not largely extended by the power and impulses of Love.

A century was allowed the new church to strike its roots deep into our soil; a century of unmolested freedom, with just trial enough to make root and fibre tough and strong. The ocean rolled between it and ecclesiastical despotism. Here was Protest-

antism, and Protestantism free, unshackled, with none to dictate or circumscribe, and a new and boundless continent for its expansion. She planted her churches, established her schools and colleges, educated her children, reared her ministers, and with occasional follies and mistakes, such as will mar all things human, the thing attained was a community of free and thoughtful men, born and bred in the faith of God's own word.

When all this was accomplished, there occurred, throughout the Christian world, but chiefly on our own continent, an event, now little more than a century ago, which, if we rightly understand it, must be regarded as the most significant and important, and, in its relations to the future, suggestive and prophetic, of all which has taken place thus far in the history of the Christian church since the ascension of our Lord and the wonders of Pentecost. We refer to that great revival of religion, which, like the breath of spring, passed over the face of Christendom, the focal point of which was in the central parts of Massachusetts. Time enough has now elapsed for generalizing into one, events which, at the time, appeared distinct and unrelated. Methodism, as it arose in the English church, a thing, not a name, so ably analyzed and described by Isaac Taylor, and the revivals of religion in Scotland and New England, may be regarded as one historic development. The peculiarities were local and formal; the essential was the same in all. The substantial features of that great religious movement, were the waking up of personal consciousness,

a new sense of individual relationship to God, of intense life and earnest zeal for the conversion of souls. Men were converted to the truth of Christ in unusual numbers, with unusual rapidity and with unusual distinctness. The effect of that event has been felt in every part of the civilized world. The "missionary spirit," as the common expression is, that is, *active evangelism*, carrying and applying the gospel in every direction, at home and abroad, is the legitimate result, or rather the best description of that general movement. To mark the progress which has since been made by the Christian church, it must be observed that events, which once were extraordinary, are esteemed so no longer. The minds of men are already become familiar with occurrences and expectations which once were regarded as very uncommon. Many of the striking conversions recorded by Edwards, the pious historiographer of the earlier stages of this movement, would awaken no sense of surprise to-day. In the year 1820, Dr. Worcester, then Secretary of this Board of Foreign Missions, in an address to Christians of all denominations in this country, uses the following language: "By means of these establishments, [missionary,] and mostly since our last address to you, more than *thirty* persons, belonging to five or six different heathen nations, have, in the judgment of charity, been brought to the spiritual knowledge of the truth." The announcement is made as of a great event, and in very guarded phrase, as if it must meet with incredulity. Yet such advances have been made since then that,

without any surprise, we hear that *thousands*, in a single year, have been converted to God in the Pacific Isles. Should it be announced before this our annual session is closed, that twenty thousand among the Tamil and Armenian population of the East were truly converted to Christ, it would not appear half so wonderful as the conversion of the first ten or twenty at the beginning of that era of evangelism from which we measure our latest progress. We have been moving with a great current, of the swiftness and force of which, as of our Mississippi, we have but little conception while borne upon its mighty tide. The Christian sentiment of the country has deepened in its flow. There is more of active philanthropy now than ever before; more of organized effort to relieve misery, reclaim vice, inform ignorance; more, in a word, than at any previous epoch, to diffuse the gospel with its light and charities. Added to all which, those revivals of religion, which have given a peculiarity to this latest period of Christian development, have not disappeared; fewer in number, feebler in power, more limited in extent than we could desire, yet sufficient in well-attested effects to keep it fresh in our minds to what period of time we belong, and always prophetic of the greater disclosures of the future.

Turning to the future, we expect and believe that the gospel, diffused and extended, by appropriate instrumentalities, throughout the world, will be accompanied by a power from on high, producing effects on the minds of men, compared with

which all that has preceded is but the shadow of the sun. We predict no smooth current of undisputed and uninterrupted prosperity. Fallings away, heresies, infidelities, strugglings, like the heathenish signs of the zodiac, may be in the path of our sun. Nevertheless, the pure truth of God will receive the widest circulation. Copies of the word of God will be multiplied, and the Christian ministry reinforced in adequate numbers. All the appliances of modern invention and enterprise, the new stimulus given to commerce, and all the facilities for international communication, will find their true dignity and use in diffusing the truth of God with ever-increasing rapidity and extent. In this service of disseminating truth, there will be a place for every kind of instrumentality. Lay-agency, introduced so efficiently by Wesley and Whitefield in the last awakening of the church, was only prophetic of that universal life and activity which are hereafter to characterize the membership of the Christian church. Here then is one definite expectation for the future. Here is an appropriate place for every good work. As God converts men by truth, it is an indispensable work. "The *knowledge* of the Lord is to cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

Nor is this a service to be finished, by itself, before we are to expect yet greater things. Simultaneously with the diffusion of truth, we may expect those applications of the Divine Spirit, which will subdue opposition, conquer unbelief, and bring mankind into a personal acceptance of the gospel

in numbers, rapidity and decision, such as never yet have been seen. The great harvest, of which all preceding gatherings are but the first fruits, is yet to come. We have had, as yet, only the type and the shadow. The substantial reality is still future. Nothing yet has occurred worthy to be regarded as a fulfillment of the great promises of Scripture relative to the universal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. What occurred at Pentecost, "signs and wonders in the heavens, sun and moon changed, the heavens and the earth shaken," was only the beginning in the verification of the tropical language of Joel, the first in that long series of events which are to mark the triumphs of the Spirit of God. We rejoice over the conversion of a few, here and there; one from a family, and two from a neighborhood; but accessions are not always to be made to the church of Christ after this manner. The church will never overtake the growth of this world's population, according to such an arithmetic. We have as yet but a glimpse,—enough to bear up and guide our faith, but a prophecy still,—of the *number* of those who will be made willing in the day of God's power. They are likened unto the drops of the morning dew. The church is yet to be the joy of the whole earth; and men will flock into it as "CLOUDS AND AS DOVES TO THEIR WINDOWS."

Nor is it of numbers only that we speak. A new epoch is coming as to the character of those converted, and the nature of a religious life. We talk of men converted now; but, oh, how little do we

know of spiritual life! We are like corpses galvanized into partial vitality. We talk about the spiritual world. But how little does the strongest faith apprehend, as yet, of the powers of the world to come! Sense still holds the ascendancy. This is not to be so always. We have reason to anticipate such a new power, applied by the Holy Ghost to the souls of men, that the life, the love, the faith, the joy, the sanctity of men renewed will be so much in advance of all we now experience, that our life, compared with theirs, will appear like a sleep. Those great words, GOD, CHRIST, MAN, SIN, SALVATION, HEAVEN, HELL, over which men now slumber, even when they admit them into their intellectual convictions, will be as if illuminated with flame. We do not comprehend the gospel at all, in its richness and glory, as it will be comprehended in the future effusions of the Spirit. We see men as trees walking. We are purblind, groping our way among shadows. The time is coming when men will be as if endowed with new senses, so vivid, so intense will be their consciousness of spiritual things. God will no more be thought of as afar off, but nigh unto all who call upon him. Heaven will no more appear as a distant and dreamy world of the imagination. Its fragrant odors will be inhaled, and its happy songs will be heard by those who dwell upon the earth. Love to Christ will be no more a frozen compound of obligation and self-interest; but a well of gratitude and joy, springing up to everlasting life. Then property will all be consecrated to the best uses.

What is now extorted reluctantly, by the pressure of duty and the commands of conscience, will then be the spontaneous promptings of an ever-cheerful and ever-living love. Holiness to the Lord will be upon the bells of the horses; and commerce, and art, and enterprise, will flow on musically and joyfully in the channels of justice, love and mercy. The half-and-half life of the best Christians is only prophetic of that future power of the Spirit, when renewed man shall once more be a LIVING SOUL. The most godly men, of these modern times of revived evangelism, are but the shadows of that approaching form of the Christian man, who is to be "filled with the Spirit." Primitive Christianity did not fulfill that great promise. Beautiful was the simplicity of the early disciples of Christ. That quality is to be regained, copied and surpassed. In stature, we are children but once. But when we have outgrown infancy, and the body has reached its maturity, and the intellect its strength, the glory of our nature is in becoming little children again in simplicity of spirit. Even so the church, led through the discipline of ages, adult in strength, clothed with the sun for knowledge and power, will find her highest perfection and exaltation in superadding to all these gifts and graces the simplicity and love of those who first followed Christ as "dear children." Literally may it be true, in a sense, never imagined by ancient piety, that, as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, even so will the coming of the Son of Man be. These electric nerves,

which make the air to throb with thought and life, not always to be the heralds of mere political and mercantile tidings, will be the vehicles of religious news and religious love. Nor is it any freak of our imagination, to suppose the time may come when, as the people of God are assembled at the rising of the sun for praise and prayer, the lightning shall report it from the east, '*The Lord is here*;' and the lightning shall flash it back from the west, '*The Lord is here*,' and so the "tabernacle of God shall be with men. He shall be their God, and they shall be his people."

Long before that time shall fully come, we, fathers and brethren, will have passed from the earth. What then? Have we no relation to it? Verily, we are living in the dispensation of the Spirit. Ours is the day of preparation; in some regards more privileged, since faith, patience and labor are the instruments of future success. Better are our times than those of our fathers. For their fidelity, for their quick discernment of the ways and work of God, we may well be thankful; but the future is all bright with promise for us and our children. Our fathers are still with us. Their grateful spirits are over us and among us, when we meet to prosecute the work which they began. As the martial hero, whom poetry has described on the eve of battle as new-strung with life, when, at the tap of his drum, the shades of his ancestors came thronging around him, in the dusky air; so do we feel ourselves cheered, ennobled and exalted, by the memory of the good and the great, whose

faces smile on us from the past and from heaven; the serene and hopeful Worcester, the sagacious Chapin, the devout Lyman, the generous Phillips, the manly Huntington. We knew not how to spare them when Evarts, Cornelius, Wisner and Armstrong were taken from the world; but we have found that they are not lost to us and our cause, now that the heavens have touched them. In the inventory of available means by which the church is to conduct her conquests, we could not afford to subtract the influence of those who have already died in the service. Our dead missionaries are as eloquent as the living. The brave soldier who was bearing home the heart of his King, in an urn, to be entombed in his native land, when sorely pressed and in danger of defeat, rose in his stirrups, and, before the eyes of his troops, threw the precious treasure far in advance, into the very thickest of the enemy; knowing that this would be the surest method of inciting his countrymen to press forward to the rescue. The church has thrown many precious hearts into Heathenism, as the pledge and the motive for further advancement. Those who have sent their Newells, Lathrops and Huntingtons, their Fiskes, their Halls and their Grants, their own sons, daughters, brothers and sisters to die in Asia, Africa and the islands of the sea, have never so much as thought of abandoning a cause already endeared to them by so many precious associations. A thousand living hearts and homes in America are drawn towards the lands in which are the graves of our deceased missionaries. As

Abraham bought a cave in the field of Machpelah, as a burying-place for his household, a pledge of his faith in the divine promise, that the whole land should one day belong to his posterity, so is every missionary grave, in every heathen country, a similar proof of our belief that the lands in which they lie will hereafter be converted unto Christ. Tocat will not be Mohammedan, when Henry Martyn shall rise in the last day; nor will Aleppo, nor Ceylon, nor the Isle of France, nor China, be lands of delusion, when those who have gone from our homes and our churches to sleep therein, shall greet the light of the promised resurrection. Towards that vast result everything advances. There are eddies and back currents in our largest rivers; but the main course is on and on, resistless and magnificent towards the ocean. The quiet Merrimac, on whose peaceful banks this missionary organization had its inception, beareth greetings to-day to the broader and deeper Ohio; and both clap their hands together, as they flow on to meet the Ganges and the Euphrates. These mighty valleys, covered with corn, laugh with gladness, in prospect of that spiritual affluence which they are yet to distribute over all the earth. The churches which have sprung up on the edge of the wilderness, fast as the forest has dropped before the march of civilization, instead of being themselves beneficiaries, in need of assistance, have, many of them, already become, and more will yet become, the most munificent almoners in a service which is destined to endless growth and reproduction. The footsteps

of our children are already on the shores of the Pacific. Before their fathers have left the world, from the "Golden Gates" which God has given us, they look out upon those Christian islands, which sparkle like gems in the sea, converted, in our own life-time, from barbarism to the dignity of an intelligent, self-governed and religious people. Our language and our religion already encircle the globe.

We pledge ourselves, therefore, to no doubtful issue. This world was not only made *by* Christ, but FOR Christ. Every loyal thought, every pious act, is auxiliary to that kingdom of the Redeemer which has the oath of God, and the decree of eternity for the certainty of its triumph. For that result, Faith waiteth with calm serenity; her hand upon her anchor. Christian calmness is not the offspring of doubt, but of conscious strength. God has anointed his king on his holy hill of Zion. Clouds may hang around its top, and billows may break at its feet, but that mountain standeth on its eternal foundations. Oppose in heart or life the dominion of Christ, and the wheels of the prophet's vision roll over us and grind us to powder. Acquiesce therein, and we become identified with that numberless throng who will swell the train of His triumphs and reflect and share the glories of His reign. We shall die; but Christ liveth. Because He liveth, we shall live also. Good and faithful men shall be jewels in the diadem of our God, which will sparkle when the stars are dead.